

TRAVEL PROGRAM GUIDE

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Introduction

Administrative Resource Center's travel program makes it easy for agencies and their travelers to meet Federal travel requirements. ARC uses GovTrip, an end-to-end, online E-Gov Travel system that supports the entire government travel process. GovTrip is used to plan and electronically authorize travel, make reservations, deliver electronic tickets, calculate and approve reimbursements, and archive data. Trained customer service representatives, as well as online documentation, are available to help users process documents in the system.

ARC provides this guidance to clarify procedures and areas that need interpretation or are discretionary by agency. Treasury Directives and Federal Travel Regulations govern any matter not specifically addressed by ARC. Areas not specifically addressed in either the FTR or ARC policy are left to the discretion of the agency.

Pre-Travel Preparation

First-time travelers need to complete the following prior to traveling:

- GovTrip self-registration to ensure travel authorization, reservations, and voucher can be processed;
- An ARC Online Applications Access Request Form if the first time traveler is also an approving official;
- A Direct Deposit Form to ensure the traveler is reimbursed timely through an electronic deposit into a bank account;
- A Travel Credit Card Application, which should be processed at least two weeks prior to traveling, to ensure the traveler has access to a credit card to reserve hotel rooms and purchase airline tickets, as well as obtain ATM travel advances; and
- A Phone Card Application should be completed if the traveler expects to make business calls while in travel status and the agency offers this program. Calls made with a phone card are less expensive than those charged directly to a hotel room. Check your agency telecommunication staff for details.



GovTrip, E-Gov Travel System

According to the FTR, travelers must use the E-Gov Travel System once their agencies make it available to them. You must use GovTrip and your agency-designated TMC to obtain flight reservations. Flight reservations using commercial means (Orbitz, Travelocity, other travel agents, etc.) are not permitted. Travelers are responsible for any additional costs resulting from the failure to use GovTrip, including service fees, cancellation penalties or other additional costs. In addition, the agency may take appropriate disciplinary action (from the FTR).

GovTrip is used to prepare TDY authorizations, make reservations, and electronically route and approve the travel authorizations, TDY vouchers, and local vouchers. GovTrip users consist of travelers, document preparers, budget reviewers (optional), and approving officials. Access to GovTrip for new users is obtained by self-registration, a process that allows the user to create his own user ID, password, and challenge question/response. A new user who is an approving official will be granted access by completing the ARC Online Applications Access Request Form and then completing a shorter version of the self-registration process.

GovTrip maintains a routing profile for each traveler. This profile identifies to whom the traveler's documents route for review and approval. Users may request changes to their profile by contacting ARC Travel Services.

Although the system is user-friendly, it is recommended that GovTrip users attend an ARC GovTrip training session. Training sessions are available quarterly in Parkersburg, WV. However, customers may arrange a customized on-site training session by contacting the ARC Franchise Service Manager.

ARC Travel Services, available at 304-480-8000, option 1, provides assistance to users with password resets, system access problems, specific GovTrip document processing, and travel policy questions. Customer service is provided from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, EST, during business days.



Temporary Duty Station (TDY) Travel

Travel Authorizations

A single trip authorization is a written order prepared for an individual to take one specific official trip to a temporary duty station, a place away from the official duty station, and includes a specific purpose, itinerary, and estimated costs. The authorization allows employees to incur official travel expenses: transportation, lodging, meals, and miscellaneous expenses.

Document preparers and approving officials must use GovTrip to prepare, audit, approve, and route travel authorizations.

Once an approving official electronically signs an authorization in GovTrip, the travel authorization will be uploaded into the core accounting system during a daily, automated process. The traveler must confirm that he/she has authorization to travel prior to departure. Printed travel authorizations are not required for record retention or audit purposes.

Approving officials should ensure that all travel authorizations for the fiscal year are processed by August 31 for improved budget control and monitoring. Any unexpected travel needs arising during the month of September should have prior verbal approval from the agency budget contact. GovTrip, however, is available for processing travel authorizations throughout the month of September.

The agency will fully fund all authorized travel outside the official duty station except as noted elsewhere in this guidance (Non-Federal source funding). An approving official for the cost center being charged should electronically sign travel authorizations within that cost code. Authorizations should be prepared and approved in GovTrip even when the traveler expects to incur no reimbursable expenses.

Amendments to authorization documents are required for cancellations, changes to mode of travel that include common carrier, and an increase to a requested advance. If the accounting information must be changed, contact ARC Travel Services for guidance. Amendments may be required for date changes that impact reservations made in GovTrip. Note the reason for the amendment in the comment section of the authorization.

Approving officials must promptly cancel authorizations in GovTrip for trips that will not occur to ensure that travel funds are de-obligated in the accounting system. Travelers must promptly repay any travel advance issued for the canceled trip. The traveler is responsible for canceling any transportation or lodging reservations timely.



Special TDY Authorizations

TDY authorizations involving special circumstances are explained in this section: non-Federal source funding, actual subsistence approval, emergency travel, travel outside of normal business hours, and extended TDY.

Non-Federal Source Funding

A designated agency official must approve, in advance, any non-Federal source funding of a traveler's expenses after review by the agency legal counsel. Treasury Directive 12-24 permits this type of funding and requires special reporting. The document preparer should select Non-Federal Source Funding from the GovTrip travel purpose codes in order to identify this type of travel.

In some cases, certain types of travel funded by charitable and educational organizations -- as defined in the Internal Revenue Code, Section 501(c)(3) -- do not necessitate submission of the documentation described below.

Non-Federal source funding includes payments for travel, subsistence, or related expenses by check or similar instrument to the agency, or payments-in-kind. Payments-in-kind are the provision of meals, lodging, or transportation at no cost to the traveler or to the agency. Non-Federal source funding providers should not make payments directly to the traveler. The traveler must provide the dollar value of the benefits received when the voucher is prepared.

Do not confuse non-Federal source funding with meals and/or lodging for which the agency has paid as part of a registration fee. This also does not include meals and/or lodging provided or funded by another government agency. In these instances, the travel authorization should indicate the meals and/or nights of lodging covered by the registration fee or provided by the other Federal source. An agency will not reimburse any claim made by the traveler for these items. GovTrip will compute the amounts to deduct. No deduction to the per diem rate is required for meals provided by airlines, hotels, or friends and relatives while traveling.

To obtain approval of non-Federal source funding, submit the following documentation to ARC at least two weeks prior to traveling:

- Travel Authorization: In GovTrip, select the travel purpose type for Non-Federal Source Funding. Provide the name of the funding source and specify the expenses provided in the comments to the approving official section;
- A short memo from the employee's approving official describing the nature of the function (conference, seminar, training, or speaking engagement) and how the function relates to the traveler's official duties. The agency cannot approve non-Federal source funding for travel to perform an agency statutory function or promotional vendor training held for the primary purpose of marketing the non-Federal source's products;
- The name and phone number of a contact at the non-Federal source who is familiar with the reimbursement or payment-in-kind involved; and
- A letter of invitation from the non-Federal source, if available.

Actual Subsistence Approval

The approving official may determine that the maximum per diem rate is inadequate for the temporary duty assignment and authorize reimbursement of actual subsistence expenses. The actual expense allowable may not exceed 300% of the total maximum applicable per diem rate and may be applied to lodging, meals, or both. Other agencies may have further restrictions.

The authorization must state the justification for the actual subsistence expenses in the comment section of the authorization. Examples of situations supporting approval of actual subsistence expense reimbursement include:

- When a traveler must procure lodging at a prearranged place and the costs exceed the per diem allowance;
- When affordable lodging is not available within reasonable commuting distance and the extra transportation costs result in little or no savings;
- When travel is to an area where costs have temporarily escalated for special events or functions; or
- Any other reason approved within your agency.

There is a special rate available for conferences. This is slightly over per diem but does not warrant actual expense approval. See meals and subsistence reimbursements for more information.



Emergency Travel

An approving official can verbally authorize emergency travel (due to illness or injury, death, or catastrophic occurrences (see Definitions)) that becomes necessary after working hours. A travel authorization must be created as soon as possible by the traveler or another document preparer. Emergency reservations must be made by contacting the agency-designated TMC (use the after-hours emergency line when making reservations after the TMC's regular business hours). A traveler experiencing the need for emergency travel should contact their approving/authorizing official as soon as possible to determine reimbursable expenses as some items are on a case-by-case basis or at the discretion of the agency. Check with your agency for agency-specific policies pertaining to emergency travel.



Travel Outside of Regular Duty Hours

Approving officials normally do not require travelers to travel outside their regular duty hours, including Federal government holidays and weekends. When a traveler must travel outside regular duty hours, the approving official must determine if overtime compensation or compensatory time off is applicable, and approve and submit such payment for processing. Contact the agency Human Resources office for guidance concerning these entitlements.



Extended Periods of TDY

An agency may prescribe a reduced per diem rate lower than the maximum prescribed rate. This is done when the agency can determine in advance that lodging and/or meal costs will be lower than the per diem rate. In such a case, the lowest authorized per diem rate must be stated in the travel authorization.

An approving official may authorize a reimbursed trip home for extended periods of TDY. Extended period of TDY is a continuous TDY status for more than two consecutive weeks (14 calendar days).

Reimbursement for round-trip transportation and per diem or actual expense on a voluntary trip home while on an extended TDY assignment is limited to what the traveler would have been allowed had the traveler remained at the TDY location. Document preparers should add a comment to the authorization that specifically details what is allowed. Any leave which needs to be incurred with a weekend trip home must be authorized by the traveler's supervisor. The FTR allows this type of trip during non-work days.



Travel Advances

Employees authorized to travel on official business may obtain an advance of funds through the use of the travel credit card. Travel credit card holders must obtain their advances from Automated Teller Machines (ATM) rather than by direct deposit. ATM advances are not requested on the travel authorization and require no special approval. The credit card company adds the ATM withdrawals to the traveler's credit card account and charges a fee. The financial institution that operates the ATM may also assess a user fee. Both fees are reimbursable and should be included on the voucher as a miscellaneous expense.

Travelers who do not have a travel credit card must obtain travel advances by direct deposit. The traveler or document preparer must contact ARC Travel Services to request an advance on the travel authorization in GovTrip. Approving officials approve direct deposit advances in GovTrip when they electronically sign the travel authorization. Approving officials should sign the travel authorization at least four days before the scheduled trip to ensure that the traveler receives the direct deposit travel advance prior to travel.

The following guidelines limit the amount of travel advances:

- The approving official will hold direct deposit travel advances to a minimum amount and will approve them only when warranted.
- ARC will not issue direct deposit travel advances for amounts less than \$50 or for one-day trips.
- ARC limits travel advances to 80% of the estimated cash needs of the trip, excluding transportation and lodging charges that it pays for directly.
- Travelers with travel credit cards receive advances using ATMs.
- ARC issues no advances to travelers who have had their card suspended or canceled due to delinquency or personal use.

Travelers are responsible for liquidating direct deposit travel advances timely by completing travel vouchers within five days following completion of authorized travel. Travelers who have an outstanding advance after claiming reimbursement for travel or who have a trip canceled or postponed must repay travel advances within 30 days. If left unpaid, the advance becomes taxable income to the traveler. ARC will monitor outstanding travel advances and pursue debt collection actions, such as salary offset and IRS tax refund offset, to collect outstanding advances.



Travel Vouchers

All employees should keep a record of government reimbursable travel expenditures and complete a travel voucher to request reimbursement. Document preparers must use GovTrip to prepare travel vouchers. Travel vouchers do not need to be printed and retained.

The traveler faxes or scans all required receipts into the electronic voucher in GovTrip before submitting the voucher to the approving official. Receipts are necessary for lodging, common carrier, rental cars, and for any other necessary expense in excess of \$75 (except for meals covered under a per diem rate). Lodging receipts must include the name and address of the lodging facility, the dates, and the cost. The lodging receipt should show that the balance has been paid in full. The approving official will view the receipts before approving the voucher. Northrop Grumman, the E-Gov Travel vendor of the GovTrip program, will retain receipts and other documentary evidence for six years and three months. It is each agency's discretion as to whether they will require their travelers or office to retain the hard copy receipts.

If a traveler cannot provide receipts, the traveler should furnish a statement acceptable to the approving official explaining the circumstances. The approving official may require travelers to obtain copies of receipts from the lodging establishment post-travel.

Anyone who has access to a travel document can make adjustments until it is approved. The person making the adjustment is prompted to sign the adjustment. When approved, the voucher is locked. The traveler may submit supplemental vouchers for additional expenses incurred during a trip if the original voucher has already been paid. The voucher is not paid until the traveler's approving official reviews the travel voucher and required receipts and approves the voucher in GovTrip.

The traveler is required to complete the travel voucher in GovTrip within five days after completing the authorized travel. Travelers attempting to defraud the government will not only forfeit rights to reimbursement but may be subject to criminal penalties. The traveler's claim for reimbursement will accurately reflect the facts involved in every instance so that the traveler avoids any violation or apparent violation of applicable regulations. To expedite payment, the traveler should ensure a completed direct deposit form is on file with ARC.

Approving officials must approve properly prepared travel vouchers or return erroneous or incomplete travel vouchers to travelers within seven business days after the traveler signs the voucher. The payment office must pay a proper voucher within 30 days after submission, or be subject to Prompt Payment, as outlined in the FTR. It is important for the approving official to abide by this time frame to prevent interest charges from accruing on the traveler's reimbursement. Reimbursements after 30 days from when the traveler signs the voucher will accrue interest.

ARC reimburses travel expenses through a direct deposit into the traveler's bank account. Once ARC has processed a direct deposit form for a traveler, ARC processes all future travel payments to the traveler by direct deposit.

As of October 1, 2005, the use of Split Disbursement is now mandatory. ARC will transmit a designated portion of the cardholder's reimbursement to the travel credit card vendor to apply against the cardholder's account. Any remaining reimbursement will be sent to the cardholder's bank account.

Travelers may request a review of reimbursements denied by an approving official. A designated agency representative will make a determination if the reimbursement is proper under the FTR and agency policy. If a traveler still disputes the amount of reimbursement, the claim can be referred to the GSA Board of Contract Appeals for a decision.

ARC will perform post-payment audits on a randomly-selected sample of electronically-routed travel vouchers processed each month. Approving officials or travelers must be prepared to provide the necessary documentary evidence to support the travel reimbursement when the receipts are not electronically attached to the voucher.

ARC will not pursue collection of an overpayment of \$25 or less, but will collect overpayments greater than \$25. ARC will take no action for underpayments of \$25 or less, but will send notice of an underpayment of more than \$25 to the approving official and the traveler. Travelers may submit supplemental vouchers for underpayments.

Transportation Expense Reimbursement

Approving officials must authorize the method of transportation resulting in the greatest advantage to the government, considering cost and other factors such as lost work time, overtime compensation, energy conservation, and number of employees traveling. Travel by common carrier (air, rail, or bus) generally will be the most energy-efficient, least costly, and most expeditious. Other methods of transportation, such as government-furnished vehicle, rental car, and privately-owned vehicles (POV), may be authorized as advantageous only when the use of common carrier transportation would seriously interfere with the performance of official business or impose an undue hardship upon the employee, or when the total cost by common carrier would exceed the cost by some other method of transportation.

Approving officials will not make the determination that another method of transportation would be more advantageous to the government than common carrier on the basis of personal preference or minor inconvenience to the traveler. Approving officials must limit expense reimbursement to the method of travel most advantageous to the government, even though the traveler may choose an alternate method for personal preference. Approving officials should prepare a cost estimate of alternate travel modes to determine which is most advantageous to the government prior to preparing the authorization. This information should be retained for audit purposes.

Any additional cost resulting from the use of a method of transportation other than that specifically authorized, approved, or required by regulation, shall be the traveler's responsibility. A constructive cost voucher must be prepared to determine the limit of reimbursement on transportation expenses when travelers choose an alternative method of transportation for personal reasons. Constructive cost voucher is the preparation of two travel vouchers with a different mode, route, or time for the same trip. One voucher is prepared according to what would normally occur in performance of official travel; the other according to what actually occurred. The employee is reimbursed for the lesser of the two amounts. Approving officials use constructive cost vouchers to determine limits of reimbursement when actual costs are not the most advantageous to the Government. Contact ARC Travel Services for guidance on the preparation of constructed cost documents.

Local transportation expenses for the following purposes will be reimbursed:

- Between residence and office on the day of travel requiring at least one night's lodging;
- To and from carrier terminals; and
- To, from, and between places of work.

Local transportation expenses include the cost of taxicabs, public transportation, POV, and parking. Approving officials must authorize the method of transportation that results in the greatest advantage to the government. Taxicabs should not be authorized on the basis of personal preference or minor inconvenience to the traveler.

All ticketed transportation reservations must be made using the agency's Travel Management Center (TMC). Any fees charged by the TMC are added as an expense to the authorization when transportation or hotel arrangements are made using the reservation module within GovTrip and are included on the travel voucher.

Meals and Subsistence Reimbursements

Travelers are provided a per diem allowance to cover the following expenses: lodging and meals; incidental expenses, such as tips to waiters, porters, bellhops, and hotel housekeepers; telegrams and telephone calls to reserve hotel accommodations; and transportation between the traveler's place of lodging or business and the dining place.

Per diem allowance is a daily allotment to an employee for lodging, meals, and related incidental expenses. The per diem allowance does not include transportation expenses or other miscellaneous travel expenses. Taxes for domestic lodging are not covered by the per diem rate, but are itemized separately as a miscellaneous expense. Current per diem rates are maintained in GovTrip or at the CONUS Per Diem Homepage.

Actual subsistence expense reimbursement is permitted in certain limited circumstances. See Actual Subsistence Expense Approval for more information.

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Other Expense Reimbursements

Telephone Calls

Personal and business telephone calls are reimbursable expenses on the travel voucher designated as Authorized Call Home for personal and Business Call/Internet for business. Travelers are encouraged to obtain a government-issued phone card or an agency cell phone for all authorized calls. Travelers possessing a government-issued phone card should use the card and not charge calls to the lodging statement.

Approving officials may approve actual charges for personal calls that are considered reasonable. The general rule is not to exceed an average of \$10 per day for domestic travel and \$20 per day for foreign travel. This general rule is not an entitlement of the average amount per day, but it is an allowance of actual telephone expenses up to the average daily amount. Any exceptions should be noted in the comments section of the voucher.

Although no limit is placed on the number, duration, or cost of business-related telephone calls that the traveler may place, the approving official should closely monitor such telephone usage.

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ATM Fees

ATM fees associated with the government travel credit card are reimbursable expenses. This includes a fee that is charged by the credit card vendor and an access charge assessed by the financial institution that operates the ATM. The current travel card vendor charges a 1.25% ATM fee.

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Miscellaneous

The FTR addresses reimbursable miscellaneous expenses such as charges for excess baggage, telegrams, taxes for lodging, facsimiles, and foreign currency conversion fees. Clothing care expenses are reimbursable as a miscellaneous expense when a traveler incurs a minimum of four consecutive nights of official travel lodging.

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Local Travel

Local travel at the official duty station is defined as travel performed within 50 miles of the permanent duty station (PDS) or residence from which an employee commutes daily. This may be reduced to 30 miles from the PDS/residence when travel involves training, conference attendance, or severe conditions that may endanger the health or safety of an employee (Treasury Directive 74-15). Although there is no pre-authorization form to submit for this type of travel, employees should perform local travel only when an approving official directs them to do so.

Travelers should use the method of transportation that results in the greatest advantage to the government when cost and other factors are considered. This includes public transportation, government vehicle, taxicab, and POV.

For travel between a traveler's residence and a temporary duty location within the official duty station, the traveler ordinarily will be reimbursed for mileage, parking, taxicab fares and tips, and other local transportation expenses only to the extent that allowable costs exceed the employee's regular transportation expenses between his/her residence and the permanent duty station.

Normal commuting costs will be deducted on travel in the local area in the following situations:

- When travel to the first appointment of the day is made directly from the residence, or travel from the last appointment of the day is made directly to the residence. Claim the lesser of the expenses incurred or the expenses that would have been incurred had the trip been taken from or to the official duty station instead; or
- When traveling to/from a training class within the local area.

A traveler may be authorized for reimbursement of taxicab fares and tips for travel from the official duty station to home only when the employee depends upon public transportation for such travel incident to officially ordered work outside of regular working hours and the employee travels during hours of infrequently scheduled public transportation or darkness.

As a general rule and except as provided in this subparagraph, travelers must pay for their own commuting expenses, including on those occasions when travelers work overtime or when they are called back to work to perform involuntary, unscheduled overtime duty. The approving official that has the authority to direct the traveler to perform the overtime work will approve any reimbursement.

Travelers will submit claims for reimbursement of local travel expenses using GovTrip. Travelers may submit claims at least quarterly regardless of amount if they have incurred any reimbursable expenses during that quarter. The claim should detail the purpose of the travel and the names and organizational affiliations of any passengers in the taxicab, POV, or government vehicle. No claim should cross fiscal years. The traveler faxes or scans all required receipts into the electronic voucher in GovTrip before submitting the local voucher to the approving official. The approving official must review and approve the claim in GovTrip. Payment will be by direct deposit into the employee's bank account.

Local travel vouchers are not required to be printed for record retention or audit purposes. Northrop Grumman, the E-Gov Travel vendor of the GovTrip program, will retain receipts and other documentary evidence for six years and three months.

Travel Arrangements

Airline Reservations

All reservations must be made through the servicing Travel Management Center (TMC) and be charged to the traveler's individual government travel credit card (or the agency's centrally-billed account (CBA)). Designated personnel or travelers may make airline reservations. Agency management officials determine whether an infrequent traveler (those employees who travel once a year or less) will be exempt from the use of an individual government travel credit card. Infrequent travelers who do not use a government travel credit card must charge their airline tickets to the agency's centrally-billed travel credit card.

The traveler must attach a copy of the flight itinerary/invoice to the voucher in GovTrip along with other required travel receipts. The traveler must return any unused tickets to the TMC immediately to ensure they receive timely credit on their government travel credit card.

Only the agency head or designee may authorize travelers to use cash to buy passenger transportation services costing more than \$100 from common carriers. Cash is considered to be any form of payment other than use of travel credit cards or billing to the agency's centrally-billed account. If a traveler cannot obtain advance approval because of a bona fide emergency, the purchase may be ratified post-travel. The traveler must attach the flight itinerary/invoice to the voucher in GovTrip for review and approval by the approving official. The traveler must also explain the reason for the emergency purchase in the comment section of the travel authorization or voucher.



Contract Airlines

Agencies must use contract airlines, except in the limited situations explained below. The Travel Management Center partnered with GovTrip will designate contract flights in the reservation module and list those flights first when available. Approving officials may authorize the use of non-contract air carriers in the following situations:

- Seating space is unavailable for the scheduled service of the awardee air carrier or the scheduled service would require the traveler to incur overnight lodging expense;
- The contract's flight schedule is inconsistent with the government's policy of scheduling travel during normal working hours to the maximum extent practicable;
- Rail service is available, and such service is cost effective and consistent with mission requirements; or
- A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare available to the general public, the use of which will result in a lower total trip cost to the Government or other mandatory user. This determination is based upon a cost comparison to include the combined cost of transportation, lodging, meals and related expenses. Discount fares restricted to government employees cannot be used. Also, this exception does not apply if a contract carrier offers a comparable fare and has seats available at that fare.

Justification for using a non-contract carrier must be selected in the travel authorization and voucher. If a cost comparison justification is needed, contact ARC Travel Services for guidance. The traveler should submit all documentation to the approving official by attaching documentation using the receipt section of the authorization. If use of a non-contract air carrier is not known until after the authorization is submitted, the authorizing official may ratify the use on the travel voucher.



Penalty and Non-refundable Fares

If booked using the E-Gov Travel System (GovTrip or the TMC) and meeting one of the conditions for using a non-contract carrier, non-refundable fares may be used when practical and economical. Only when cancellation of travel is unlikely may the employee use fares that are either non-refundable or for which a charge or penalty is incurred for refund or exchange. If the agency cancels the travel, the approving official may approve the expense and the agency will pay for the ticket. However, if the traveler chooses to cancel the ticket, the approving official may determine that the traveler is liable for the cost of the ticket.

If penalty fares are purchased less than three weeks prior to departure date, the traveler must use their IBT credit card. If penalty fares are purchased more than three weeks prior to departure date, traveler must call ARC Travel Services for guidance.

Warning: Travelers are responsible for any additional costs resulting from the failure to use GovTrip, including service fees, cancellation penalties or other additional costs. In addition, the agency may take appropriate disciplinary action (from the FTR). In other words, you must use GovTrip and your agency-designated TMC. Reservations using commercial means (Orbitz, Travelocity, other travel agents, etc.) are not permitted.

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Personal/Official Travel

A traveler may elect to include personal travel with official travel. Reservation makers must separately identify the official transportation needs from the personal needs to the TMC. The TMC will bill the personal travel separately from the official travel. The travel reimbursement is limited to the lower of actual or authorized transportation costs.

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First-Class Accommodations

Travelers using common carrier transportation for travel on official business will use less-than-first-class accommodations. The appropriate official may approve first-class travel. Treasury Directive 74-13 states the bureau head must approve first class travel for Treasury entities. The FTR outlines justifications for first-class travel. Contact ARC Travel Services for additional guidance.

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Use of Government-furnished Vehicles

Government-furnished vehicles may be available for use by agency travelers. Contact the agency Administrative Services Office for guidance.

When an agency traveler uses a Government-furnished vehicle, its use will be limited to official purposes. When two or more travelers ride together, the names of the other travelers must be stated on the travel authorization and voucher.

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Rental Vehicles and Special Conveyances

A traveler may rent a vehicle or other conveyance if authorized or approved as advantageous to the government by the traveler's approving official whenever the traveler is engaged in official business within or outside his/her designated post of duty.

A traveler should rent all vehicles for official business travel from a car rental agency that participates in the U. S. Government Car Rental Agreement. Rental should be at the government contract rate. Using the travel management center partnered with GovTrip for making rental car reservations should ensure a participating rental agency is used, if available. The traveler may only use another car rental company when an appropriate vehicle is not available or a participating company is not in the vicinity. See the GSA contract car rental listing.

The traveler should select a car size that is sufficient for the number of employees on official business. A single traveler should not rent a car larger than full-size. Approving officials may authorize rental of a van when four or more travelers will be riding together. Four-wheel drive or all-wheel drive vehicles may be approved when necessary due to weather. Such special authorizations should be noted in the comment section of the authorization.

Generally, agencies should not permit travelers to rent luxury-class automobiles for official government travel. Travelers will be reimbursed for the rental of a luxury car only if an acceptable written justification is submitted to the approving official citing medical/handicap problems or verifying that no appropriate-sized vehicle was available.

The traveler should pay separately for gasoline and itemize it separately on the travel voucher. Reimbursement for charges incurred as a result of returning the car with a less than full tank of gasoline may be reduced to a more reasonable gasoline rate.



Insurance/Accidents

The traveler should waive all rental car insurance. Extra fees paid for insurance cannot be reimbursed. A traveler may be reimbursed up to the deductible amount (reflected in the rental agreement) for personal funds paid to car rental agencies for damage sustained while in the performance of official business. If the rental agency bills the agency, payment will be made directly to the rental agency. All reimbursement claims must be supported by documentation, which includes statements and itemized bills from the employee, the rental agency, and an accident report from the police department. The package will be forwarded to the agency Chief Counsel for approval of payment. Payment will be charged to the traveler's office funds under Tort Claims.



Use of Privately-Owned Vehicles

Use of a privately-owned vehicle (POV) may be authorized when it is advantageous to the government for the performance of official travel. The Federal Travel Regulations provide a reduced mileage rate to be used when POV is not advantageous to the government and is chosen for personal preference. This reduced POV is appropriate to use when the traveler chooses POV although a government car is available. Travelers generally may be reimbursed for parking fees, ferry fares, and bridge, road, and tunnel tolls.



Lodging

Travelers or designated personnel should make hotel and motel reservations by using the reservation module in GovTrip. First consideration must be given to establishments that are contracted by GSA under the FedRooms Program to ensure that the traveler stays in fire safe accommodations at a government rate. The TMC partnered with GovTrip will identify the commercial lodging facilities in the FedRooms program. In GovTrip, FedRooms facilities are identified by "FedRooms Property" listed in the search results. Lodging facilities participating in the FedRooms program offer rates at or below government per diem rates, are FEMA-certified, offer cancellation deadline of 4 pm or later on day of arrival, and have a 2-star or higher rating. FEMA-approved hotels meeting fire safety requirements can also be found on the internet. The TMC will also ensure the hotel charges are placed on the traveler's government travel card.

Some hotels charge taxes from which government travelers may be exempt. Check GSA's list of State Tax Exemption Forms to take with you if your hotel requires one.



Travel Credit Card Program

All frequent travelers must use the individual travel card for airline tickets, hotel expenses, rental car expenses, and ATM advances. Infrequent travelers are exempted from the mandatory requirement but may choose to use a travel card voluntarily. Infrequent travelers are defined as those employees who travel once a year or less. Agency management officials determine exemptions. Other travelers may be exempted when it is determined to be in the interest of the government to do so.

The travel credit card is in the name of the traveler. The card may only be used for official government travel expenses, such as lodging, gasoline, and meals. Cardholders are expected to charge as many travel expenses as possible directly to the card and use the ATM capability to obtain cash advances, when needed.

The traveler is responsible for paying the travel credit card statements upon receipt. A traveler should voucher within five days after completing a trip to ensure the related travel reimbursement is received prior to receiving the credit card statement. Travelers are required to use split disbursement. Split disbursement authorizes the agency to send a portion of the reimbursement to the credit card vendor to be applied to the cardholder's account.

Any remaining reimbursement amount is sent to the cardholder's bank account. The cardholder will still be responsible for any remaining balance on the monthly credit card statement.

Travelers who use the travel credit card for personal use or become delinquent on their credit card account may have their card canceled. Agency management may take disciplinary action.



Travel Management Centers

Travel Management Centers (TMCs) are travel agencies approved and contracted by GSA to provide transportation reservation and ticketing services to government travelers. Travelers must purchase transportation tickets through the TMC designated by their agency. Travelers will be responsible for any additional costs resulting from the failure to use the TMC or eTravel Service, including service fees, cancellation penalties, or other additional costs (e.g., higher fares, rental car charges, or hotel rates). In addition, your agency may take appropriate disciplinary action. Reservations using commercial means (Orbitz, Travelocity, other travel agents, etc.) are not permitted.

Travelers should request electronic tickets when available to reduce TMC service charges. Any TMC service charge paid by the traveler is a reimbursable travel expense. The fee will be added to the authorization by the TMC and included on the travel voucher.

Contact your TMC if you need any assistance concerning the service provided to you. Keep in mind that contacting the TMC directly may result in higher fees for reservations.



Relocation Travel

Designated approving officials may authorize relocation travel benefits provided in ARC's standard relocation benefit packages when the relocation is determined to be in the best interest of the government. Factors such as cost effectiveness, labor market conditions, and difficulties in filling the position must be reviewed to determine if the relocation is primarily for the benefit of the government or the employee.

The decision of whether relocation benefits are provided is communicated to the job candidate at the time a position is offered by the agency human resources office. Job candidates need to request any additional benefits, if required, prior to accepting a position. Approving officials must obtain required agency approvals for relocation benefits in addition to standard benefit packages.

Relocation expenses for new appointments and transfers are generally charged to the cost center of the hiring organization. Travel expenses for en route travel must be funded from the office's existing travel budget, budget object code 2100. The agency budget contact will assist approving officials in evaluating funding options for other relocation expenses. The Relocation Coordinator can assist in determining cost estimates for funding decisions.



Standard Relocation Benefits Packages

Relocation benefits are categorized into two standard benefit packages. The agency head or designee must approve additional benefits, specifically the guaranteed home sale benefit, when it is determined to be in the best interest of the government to do so.

New Appointment Package includes relocation trip and the transportation and storage of household goods.

Transfer Package includes relocation trip, transportation and storage of household goods, RITA, WTA, temporary quarters, real estate expenses, and miscellaneous expenses.



Relocation Travel Authorization

The authorizing official initiates the relocation travel authorization process by providing the following information to the Relocation Coordinator by email: the employee's name, approximate reporting date, immediate supervisor at the new location, employee's current phone and fax numbers, relocation status (new appointment or transfer), the location the employee is transferring to and from, and any additional relocation benefits, if approved.

The transferring employee is contacted by the Relocation Coordinator and provided with a Relocation Package. Included in the relocation package is a Guide to Relocation Allowance, Transfer Agreement, Relocation Questionnaire, Direct Deposit Form, Credit Card Application, Household Goods Transportation & Storage Worksheet, an Employee Guide for Shipping Household Goods, and a Withholding Tax Allowance (WTA) Agreement. The Relocation Coordinator counsels the employee on relocation entitlements and assists with the completion of forms.

The Relocation Coordinator prepares the travel authorization for changes in official duty station, after notification from the appropriate authorizing official and information provided by the transferring employee. Relocation travel authorizations are not prepared in Travel Manager at this time. The agency's Travel Contact assists by obtaining necessary approvals and signatures within the agency: budgetary, supervisory, agency head, and employee. The Travel Contact retains the original approved authorization and faxes a copy to the Relocation Coordinator and a copy to the employee.

Transferring employees must not incur relocation expenses until receiving the approved travel authorization form.



Moving Process

The Relocation Coordinator will contact the moving company with information relating to shipment and storage of household goods. The Relocation Coordinator will prepare and forward government bills of lading to the moving company as authority for movement of household goods.

The agency Travel Contact will assist the employee on transportation arrangements for the employee and family. If the agency centrally billed travel card account is used for airline/Amtrak reservations, a copy of the reservation should be forwarded to the Relocation Coordinator.



Advances

A relocating employee is expected to use a government travel credit card for relocation expenses to the greatest extent possible. When an approving official determines it is not in the interest of the government for the relocating employee to use a credit card, a direct deposit advance may be requested. The agency Travel Contact should forward the request for a direct deposit advance to the Relocation Coordinator. The employee must repay advances that exceed allowable expenses within 30 days of notice.



Travel Credit Card

A relocating employee should use their existing agency travel credit card to complete any TDY travel trips authorized by the former agency. Once all travel authorized by the former agency is completed, the relocating employee should request that the card be canceled. A new credit card application should be completed and requested through the new agency card coordinator and used for relocation expenses.



Reimbursements

ARC prepares vouchers for reimbursements for relocating employees after receipt of voucher claim documentation from the employee. See the Guide to Relocation Allowances for receipt requirements.

Vouchers are not submitted for payment until signed by the employee. The approving official reviews and signs the voucher within 7 days and forwards to the Travel Services Group.

Reimbursements include travel and transportation expenses and applicable allowances authorized in connection with a change of official station as provided in the FTR, net of applicable withholding taxes.

Decisions by the agency chief counsel, the Comptroller General, and the GSA Board of Contract Appeals (GSBCA) are also used as a basis for determining travel reimbursements. Relocation reimbursements are made by direct deposit.

The Relocation Coordinator forwards the completed voucher claim form to the employee for review and signature. The employee signs the voucher and forwards it to the Travel Contact for review and approving official approval. The Travel Contact submits the approved voucher to the Relocation Coordinator for payment.

Travelers may request a review of reimbursements denied by an approving official. A designated agency representative will make a determination if the reimbursement is proper under the FTR and agency policy. If a traveler still disputes the amount of reimbursement, the claim can be referred to the GSA Board of Contract Appeals for a decision.



Income Tax Reporting

The Relocation Coordinator makes the required tax deposits biweekly and files the required employer tax returns quarterly. At the end of the calendar year, the Relocation Coordinator issues W-2 statements for taxable relocation income.

Included in the employee reimbursement is a Withholding Tax Allowance, which is provided to reimburse employees for income taxes incurred on taxable relocation travel benefits. At the time the WTA is paid to the employee, the employee's actual income tax rate is unknown. At the end of the calendar year, the employee's actual tax liability is compared to the WTA and a reconciliation is performed. The result is an additional expense reimbursement to the employee or a debt that the employee must pay. This computation is based upon information provided by the employee on the Relocation Income Tax Allowance Certification Statement.

The Relocation Coordinator will forward a Relocation Income Tax Allowance Certification Statement to the employee. This is required each year the employee receives covered taxable relocation income. The employee will complete the statement and return it to the Relocation Coordinator along with the following: copies of W-2s and self-employment income, if any.



Definitions

ARC is the Administrative Resource Center, Bureau of the Public Debt. You may contact ARC Travel Services at 304-480-8000, option 1 (email: travel@bpd.treas.gov). ARC provides travel document processing services to its customers, which includes the following responsibilities: ensuring ARC travel policy is in accordance with current travel regulations; maintaining the E-Gov Travel system, GovTrip, and ensuring adequate internal controls; training and informing travelers, approving officials, and other travel system users of travel processing procedures; sampling paid travel vouchers to determine that the expenses reimbursed are within the prescribed rates and regulations of this guidance and the FTR, the required supporting documentation is attached, the figures and computations on the travel voucher are accurate, and the controls within the automated travel system are effective; collecting outstanding debts from travelers; conducting periodic reviews of outstanding travel advances and authorizations; and approving and paying advances and reimbursements for expenses incidental to permanent changes in official station.

Approving Official is an employee with authority to approve or direct travel for official government business by the agency head. Approving Officials are responsible for: being knowledgeable of the Federal Travel Regulations and ARC travel policy; authorizing travel for employees under their jurisdiction in advance of the travel; determining if the travel is essential to the agency mission; ensuring adequate funds are available prior to authorizing travel; ensuring that the mode of transportation used is the most advantageous to the government and that travel expenses are held to a minimum; ensuring that GovTrip is used to prepare, process, approve, and route travel authorizations and vouchers; examining electronic travel vouchers and supporting receipts to ensure that travel for which reimbursement is claimed was performed as authorized and that expenses are reasonable, necessary, and supported by documentary evidence; ensuring that any necessary justification and documentary evidence is attached to the voucher to be retained for six years and three months; ensuring that travel outside of a traveler's regular duty hours is minimal and approving and submitting related overtime/compensatory time off, if appropriate, for processing; and, ensuring travelers under their jurisdiction complete direct deposit forms to receive travel payments electronically, file vouchers for completed trips, and comply with the travel credit card program guidelines.

Budget Reviewer is an optional role in the document review and routing process within GovTrip. Approving officials may choose to omit this step. Electronic documents can be routed to a budget reviewer before being routed to the approving official.

Document Preparer is the employee who initially creates travel documents within GovTrip. This is usually the traveler or office administration staff.

Documentary Evidence for support of travel disbursements includes airline ticket itinerary, receipts for lodging, rental vehicles, and other expenses of \$75 or more, and any supplementary memos or justifications pertaining to the trip. Documentary evidence must be attached to the voucher and will be retained by Northrop Grumman, the E-Gov Travel vendor, for six years and three months.

Emergency Travel is travel which results from: (a) Your becoming incapacitated by illness or injury not due to your own misconduct; (b) the death or serious illness of a member of your family; or (c) a catastrophic occurrence or impending disaster, such as a fire, flood, or act of God, which directly affects your home.

GovTrip is an E-Gov Travel system used to prepare, examine, route, approve, and record travel authorizations, advances, and reimbursements.

Local Travel is defined as travel performed within 50 miles of the permanent duty station (PDS) or residence from which an employee commutes daily. This may be reduced to 30 miles from the PDS/residence when travel involves training/conference attendance or severe conditions that may endanger the health or safety of an employee. Reference: Treasury Directive 74-15.

New Appointment is a newly hired employee with no previous service with the Federal Government.

Non-Federal Source is any person or entity other than the government of the United States.

Official Duty Station is the local metropolitan area of the employee's permanent office or office of record.

Residence is the location from which an employee commutes daily to his/her official duty station.

Split Disbursement allows the agency to send part or all of an employee's travel reimbursement to the travel card vendor for crediting to the employee's travel credit card account.

Transfer is a government employee who voluntarily transfers between agencies or within an agency.

Travel Credit Card is a U.S. Government credit card issued by the agency to its travelers for use when performing official government travel. The traveler is personally responsible for any charges made on the card.

Travel Contact is an agency employee responsible for resolving travel issues that are specific to the agency. This includes: providing internal policy/guidance from the agency on entitlements that differ from ARC policy, providing assistance in obtaining necessary approvals and signatures within the agency, and obtaining agency head or designee decisions on discretionary areas within the Federal Travel Regulations, as necessary.

Traveler is an employee who is authorized to perform official government travel. A traveler is responsible for: being knowledgeable of the Federal Travel Regulations and agency travel policy, including knowledge that any deviation from authorized travel may relieve the agency from certain liabilities; ensuring that his/her trip is authorized prior to departure; exercising the same care in incurring expenses that a prudent person would exercise if traveling on personal business; making transportation reservations early to take advantage of contract or discount fares, canceling reservations for lodging and carrier service timely, and returning unused tickets promptly; accounting for any promotional materials received in conjunction with official travel; paying all additional costs incurred in the use of transportation modes other than that authorized; completing the following forms, if necessary: direct deposit form, travel credit card application, and government phone card application; submitting travel vouchers within five days of completion of the travel; and complying with the travel credit card program guidelines.

Temporary Duty Station (TDY) Travel is travel by an employee on official business outside the defined local travel area of the employee's official duty station.

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Travel References

[Federal Travel Regulations](#)

[Current Per Diem Rates](#)

[Contract Flight Schedules](#)

[FEMA Certified Hotel Listing](#)

[State Tax Exemption Information](#)

[Contract Car Rental Listing](#)

[GSA Board of Contract Appeals](#)

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